Herskovits & Herskovits E-8 (1929-1929) 1934
Bush Negroes
Saramacca

to be admired for their artistry, but there also for ceremonial purposes which were never divulged. When one of these benches was later taken down to show the magic of paper which, placed on the top of a carving and rubbed with black crayon, reproduced the design beneath, the Granman looked startled, and then ordered that it be replaced. Nor were other rubbings allowed.

On both sides of these massed benches were many objects which could barely be distinguished in the half darkness of the house. There were guns and canisters, there were a few native brooms, and several wrapped parcels. There was also an apinti drum on which the gods were addressed. Not even at Ma'lobbi, where the chief, a famous carver, showed us many remarkable products of his art, did we see designs worked with the fine, sure lines or the beauty of individual motifs such as were traced on this apinti. The carving was in relief and covered the entire surface of the drum, which stood about three feet high, curving outwards from the top, and resting on a narrow circular base which raised its body about six inches from the ground. It was covered with a deerskin that use and exposure to the atmosphere had stained unevenly to shades of amber.

Facing these carvings was the door which, itself of wood, swung on wooden hinges of native fashioning. In relief appeared the Earth Mother, and surrounding her were the symbols of fertility. No man, not even the Granman himself, dared speak her name in this council house. At trials, when oaths were taken, she might be appealed to, but to call her idly would bring down her wrath on the Granman's clan, and, perhaps not stopping there, since the council house was of all the clans, she would revenge herself upon all the people of the Saramacca River. The carving was more beautiful than on the apinti which stood against the opposite wall. The greatest artist on the river had made it.

"That man-had the gods, ya-hai," the men said, when we talked of the Granman's carvings.

11 Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1929-1929) 1934
288 Bush Negroes 288
Saramacca

we found that for the krutu to act as a jury was an important part of its work. The krutu not only saw to the making of law, but it was also the medium for levying penalties upon those who transgressed law. The same krutu that legislated could judge infractions of its legislation. In its hands was the power to enforce the decisions it had made against the offender.

We had wondered whether, in this Surinam bush, the African court which so characterized the civilization of the ancestors of these people had survived. When we heard of the supernatural vengeance which followed upon infractions of custom, we sought to find out if people took the matter of punishment into their own hands, if kunu was reinforced by human assistance.

"Ai, mati," a chief once said to us, "kunu is strong, but the krutu is strong, too."

If a man had sworn an oath against another, had called down upon another a curse of some evil spirit, or asked that the gods make a man impotent, or that they stop the womb of his wife from conceiving, or if a man murdered by means other than witchcraft, then he was judged by a krutu. A man who had destroyed a canoe belonging to another—a serious offense, for, as the Bush Negro says, "Had our forefathers not had the wisdom to build canoes, we would still be slaves to the Bak'a"—he, too, would come before this court. The adulterer would be brought here for the assessment of his fine.

When the krutu sat as a court, the accused was not without the right of defense. If it were thieving, or adultery, or the telling of falsehoods, or trespass, or the destruction of the property of another, where the kunu involved was not of the greatest, then the case was judged on the basis of the evidence. In the court, the interests of the one who was accused were cared for by one of the elders of his side, his relative and a fellow member of his own great family. But when the crime was one of the greater ones, then methods other than the sole use of testimony were employed. Evidence was necessary, but evidence was not

Ethnohistory 8 Herskovits 2-3 (1959-1961) 1954
Bush Negroes
Saramacca

623 enough if the accused persisted in denying such crimes.
695 In that case he called upon the gods to witness that the sin of which he was accused had not been committed by him, and this called for trial by ordeal.

695 The ordeal as a judicial measure was not unknown to our own civilization. In Africa it flourished in the native courts before the coming of the white man, and, it is whispered, still persists in the Surinaame bush. The facts as we tell them, we cannot vouch for from our own experience. They were given us independently by two men who have spent many years among the Saramacca people, men who speak the language fluently and who for long periods have lived in this big bush of the Saramacca tribe. Other facts which they told us we had been able to corroborate. These whispers, however, we could not check, for few Bush Negroes would admit that they knew anything of the ordeal.

One way of trial by ordeal was to "*beke ai'i*," to drink the oath. It was utilized in accusations of witchcraft and sorcery. The priests and the elders prepared a drink of deadly poison. Over it magic incantations were pronounced by the obia men. The oath of innocence was taken, and the accused drank. If the potion was retained and the man died, his guilt had been proved, but if the drink was vomited, he was innocent. What his redress was if he were proved not guilty, we were not able to discover.

"If a man is guilty of *wisi*—of evil magic," our friend said, when he told us the story, "he would be afraid of the oath. When it came time to drink, no matter how brave he was, he would confess."

695 Then there was the proof offered in adultery cases,
694 described to us by the other man who knew the ways of the Saramacca folk. When both man and woman who had been accused of misconduct denied their guilt, the procedure this man had witnessed was this. The woman was made to kneel before the assembled kruta of the village. While she knelt there, a buzzard's feather was put into water, in a calabash of the kind they call gubi, and the water was

M Herskovits & Herskovits E-3 (1929-1930) 1934
[illegible]
Surinam

THE COUNCIL OF THE ELDERS

treated with obia. An obia man now addressed the woman who denied the charge that had been lodged against her, restating the accusation and her denial. Then he asked her once more if she were guilty, and when the answer was still "No," the test was applied.

Through the woman's tongue the quill of the feather, which had been treated with magic, was thrust. When the entire length of the feather had passed through the tongue, then it was that the proof was had. If the woman's tongue neither swelled nor showed blood, she was innocent.

But whether it be trial by ordeal or through the taking of testimony, punishment by the krutu went along with punishment by the spirits. Only incest, we learned, was not punishable by the court. That was for kunu alone to avenge.

6

Once more the krutu was in session. Where the men had "gone aside," we did not know, but while we sat in the krutu house, alone with Moana Yankuso, we heard nothing.

The Granman had spoken little. Were our hammocks tied well the night before? Were we satisfied with the arrangements he had made for the storing of our supplies?

What were the elders deciding? We could not but wonder with anxiety. Would this krutu, after the fashion of the bush, where time meant so little, come to no decision? Was the answer to be one that had been previously arranged?

Chief Singi was the first to speak.

"G'aman, we have gone aside. Your captains and bassias have spoken together. We say, the white man has come. The white man must eat. Let all be told to bring gifts, that you may feed those who have come to you."

"So it is," was the Granman's response. "Friends, great thanks to you. What you have said is good. Let all return to their villages. Let all tell their people that the white man has come. Let all come with gifts, that we may eat."

There was a chorus of affirmations. The Granman arose.

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Surinam

Chapter Nine

MEDICINE AND MAGIC

NO one in Djuka land dies a natural death. Death is caused by witchcraft. At Santi Gron on the Saramacca River, preparations are being made for a burial. The whole village is excited. The women wailing are the relatives of the dead man. Children are crying because they see others crying. Unseen drums throb dully, making the hot air pulsate. The corpse lies in an open shed with only three walls—a death house (*dede ao*). Two girls of fifteen or sixteen are fanning it steadily to keep the flies away. The man died more than a week ago; all this time the body had been lying on a platform out in the tropical heat to decompose.

It is black magic that kills. Therefore the Bush Negroes make an effort to find out who made the magic that killed this man. An ancient ritual is employed. Three to ten days the corpse is left unburied, and in the humid heat the flesh undergoes a partial liquefaction. The putrescent fluid is gathered in a calabash cup and carried around from door to door.

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Each person in the village goes through the motion of drinking some of it. Should anyone refuse to do this, he is the person who is guilty of inflicting death by witchcraft upon the deceased.

The guilt is mainly ceremonial; but sometimes a penalty is attached to anyone's refusal to "drink." The liquid is not actually swallowed, but the calabash gourd is placed to the lips. The whole ritual is probably a folk-memory of the ancestral days when actual death was meted out to the man who worked black magic.

Another ceremony to find the guilty party may follow, especially if the first has not found him. The corpse on its platform is carried in procession through the paths of the village. Leading the procession are the obeiah men daubed with pemba dotee. Their faces are bisected vertically, one half covered with clay and the other half clean. Large crescents are drawn over each breast and over the belly. In the procession are the dead man's relatives. They are accompanied always by the booming drums. Four bucks carry the platform to the doorway of each hut, and pause there, or pause in the village clearing.

The obeiah men question the corpse: "Is this the house of the person who killed you?"

The four men bearing the body, which is supposedly possessed by the spirit of the dead, shake the platform, imparting a slight movement, a semblance of life, to the corpse. Meanwhile, buzzards and vultures, the uninvited guests, perch expectantly in the wall of jungle trees that surround

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramaccaner
Aucaner

the village clearing. Flies and insects scurry. The body rolls over toward the door of the hut: yes, this is the guilty one. Or else it rolls away: no, he is innocent. The tomtoms boom again, and the procession moves on to the next hut.

After winding about the town, the procession continues along a game trail back into the forest, where the white man is not allowed to follow. There, back in the bush, the body is perhaps buried to cheat the buzzards and vultures; but we are not sure. The dead person's hut is never occupied again; neither is it repaired or demolished, but allowed, like the corpse, to decay.

Not for some time has the actual death penalty been inflicted upon those suspected of killing their neighbours by witchcraft. However, this used to be the case among the Djukas—more especially among the Aucaners—and the ceremony surrounding the detection of the guilty party is probably a survival of the Tshi-speaking people of Africa. Today the punishment of one suspected of causing death takes a more moderate form. In fact, unless the guilty party had previously announced his intention of causing the death, the punishment is "left to God." Otherwise, the guilty one may be given a severe beating, but, if the culprit escapes to a neighbouring village, it is incumbent upon the captain of that village to give him asylum. This has been noted by Mr. E. Wong, head bush police official at Moengo. Men are sometimes ostracized from the village, and are left to gain a livelihood by their own resources at some lonely spot on the river.

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

754 More than one person may be involved in the black magic
[695] that brings about death, and the burial ceremony may indicate several persons as guilty. This magic is similar to that employed by other primitive peoples. A spirit or soul resides
[774] in each living person; if this spirit is destroyed, the person will die. A man can cause the death of his enemy by summoning the spirit out of his enemy's body with herbs and charms and incantations; the spirit can then be shot with a gun. Or else he may procure some of his enemy's nail parings or hair, or any object of close personal association. He should also know his enemy's birthday and secret name. Rites are performed and, as a result, the enemy dies. His spirit has been slain. Magic, therefore, consists of the use of rituals for the purpose of compelling supernatural powers to do one's bidding.

123 For this reason many natives object to being photographed.
774 The black camera, they believe, if pointed at them and
822 clicked, will draw out their souls. The person owning the camera can then mutilate or destroy their souls at will. On our first expedition among the Bush Negroes all attempts at photography were difficult. When the attempt was made to take a native's picture the black would cry out, *"No puru me!"*—"Don't draw me out!" They firmly believed that the photographer was trying to draw out their spirits for magical purposes. On the second expedition, returning to the same villages with the developed photographs, we showed them to the natives and watched their reaction. The Negroes examined the snapshots curiously, turning them around, not

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

177 The method of finding out who is responsible for the
[495] death of a man is found in many parts of the West Coast. The details vary considerably, but the essential idea that death is caused by witchcraft, and that some individual is guilty, is found in West Africa as well as in South America.
[76] The method of binding the corpse on a platform, covered with blankets of weeds, comes from the Gold Coast.

177 A number of Bush Negro words are African in origin.
192 *Lo*, the Djuka word for clan, designates a village in Yoruba or Ibo. The *quaqua*, the resounding plank which accompanies the drums, is possibly a Kikongo or M'pongwe word from the Ivory Coast. *Azeman*, meaning a kind of vampire, is an Ewe and Tshi word, as well as a Bush Negro term. The fetish house, the *kifunga*, is probably derived from Bacongo, Luango, Cameroons, or Togo, and the word itself is in all likelihood a Bacongo term. *Leeba*, meaning "river," is an Ewe word. *Akra*, designating a kind of ghost, is a Tshi word. *Makuku*, designating a Bush Negro fireplace made with three lumps of clay, is a Kikongo word, and the custom itself is derived from the Yoruba, Slave Coast, the lower Niger, and the Central and East Sudan region.

177 The carved wooden locks, the quintessence of Bush Negro
[328] wood carving, are found also among the Ashanti, in Dahomey, and in the Sudan. The method of poisoning fish by
[226] beating into a stream the pulp of poisonous plants is common in South America among the Indians, but it is likewise found in West Africa among the Tshi, Yoruba, Togo, Congo, and Angolo peoples. The same is true of other Djuka fishing practices, such as the custom of fishing at night by torchlight.

/18 cont./

966 times, no noticeable movement has been observed, the answer is
227 negative, and one proceeds with the corpse all the way to the end of the crowd ranged on either side. Everyone endeavors to be present on such occasions in order not to cast any blame upon himself or to arouse suspicion.

If, however, the answer is in the affirmative, then one asks whether the right person or a close relative of his is here. If the answer to this is also affirmative, one proceeds to inquire about the degree of blood relationship until one has finally discovered who the actual person is. Since this happens in the presence of so many persons as witnesses, it is regarded as valid proof, and the corpse is buried. However incomprehensible and impossible this may appear, this procedure is nonetheless actually practiced con-
[123] stantly among the Bush Negroes. I have been an eyewitness to several times.

● 695 A few days later the person indicated, in case he was not
[693] present at the above-mentioned inquiry, is tracked down, if necessary fetched forcibly, and brought before the governor or the chief, who questions him in the presence of the captains or the council members. In case of denial, he is offered something to drink, which, however, he will not accept if he is guilty, since it has become apparent that whoever drinks it with a pounding or uneasy heart frequently manifests immediate symptoms, such as
[681] vomiting, swelling, chlorosis, and so forth. If the person has been prepared to brave this (in spite of the conviction of his misdeed), he is put to death by means of the most horrible and unheard-of tortures, whereas in the case of confession he is forced with the whip to reveal whom else he has poisoned during his life.

696 All the relatives of the poisoned person are then called in
682 order to be present at the punishment and to pull on his ears with all possible force by means of a pair of pincers, one after
[262] another. Subsequently a bowl with pinda blaf is set before him, in which a turtle must be boiled, as well as a tomtom made of ripe bananas. All this, after all, is regarded as the tastiest food. He is then /19/ again severely beaten with a whip, whereupon he must eat what has been prepared for him, and immediately afterwards

/19 cont./

696 he must sit unbound on a large fire arranged in gridiron fashion,
632 so that he burn completely to ashes.

[695] Never, however, is an accused put to death before three months have elapsed after the inquiry, because there still might possibly be a chance that his innocence will be proved.

682 In the case of a confession and the supplying of clear proof
[695] that the deceased gave cause to be poisoned, the culprit frequently
[672] escapes with a light punishment; sometimes also forgiveness is granted with general approval, with the condition that the culprit take upon himself to the third generation the obligation to be of service in everything to the descendants of the maltreated person.

681 It may also happen that in the case of various other misdeeds the
672 perpetrator is completely forgiven for his misdeed, but that upon his descendants to the third generation there is imposed the obligation to render slave services exactly as in the case of poisoning.

681 The majority of these slave services ordinarily consist of giving money, strong drink, or the necessities of life, as a result of which hard work must often be done in order to be able to fulfill them. Every day they are afraid that this or that may be exacted from them. There are indications, however, that not too great a misuse is made of this.

765 Twelve months after the burial there always takes place a great gathering in the hut of the deceased, at which time the period of mourning ends with rejoicing. Exuberant festivities are then celebrated, and that night an unusually great amount is drunk, eaten, and honor salutes fired. Everyone in the vicinity, insofar as he is able, is present on this occasion.

This festival is called tesa, the ending of the mourning period, and begins after one of the nearest relatives, who enjoys the greatest respect, takes a large calabash filled with water in his right hand and with it slowly walks forth out of the hut along the other dwellings nearby and is followed by a large number of people, during which he here and there sprinkles the water,
[775] nowéwatra, in drops on the ground, saying: Like this water, the soul of the deceased will also be pure, and all that was dear to him will remain tranquilly on earth without being disturbed by him who as spirit finds himself in the spirit world.

/25 cont./

923 695 (344) * The peace conditions are determined in a large building (shed). This shed is entirely open, they call it their court of justice, derived from kroetoe hoso or piketti (1). When they find

1. Piketti, place where the execution of the punishment takes place.

themselves there, whether this takes place after the conclusion of an internecine battle, or between spouses, members of a family, or former friends, the heads of the parties gather in the shed referred to and choose their places in the upper part of the building. Subsequently those concerned in this matter place themselves in the vicinity of the heads, and around these all those present who make up the public.

When all have been placed, one of the heads takes a cup (as a rule a calabash) filled with dram or still unfermented sugar cane. He scatters a few drops of this on the ground in various places in the shed, which signifies that their ancestors, who also once sat on this spot and passed judgment, are to be called up in the memory of all, and that the deceased, by having this offering presented to them first, have had respect paid to them.

(769) (712) * Once this solemnity has been carried out, the cup goes around to each one, and each of those present takes a small draught from it. After it has been emptied, and none of them has refrained from drinking from it, the peace is regarded as concluded: all feuds are forgiven, and the enmity has ceased to exist.

Should it happen that one of those present refuses to drink, then he must publicly give the reason for his refusal, and then it may sometimes happen that the considerations concerning the quarrel start anew.

[693] /26/ Then the elders or council members ordinarily withdraw from the shed and leave behind only their granman (1).

1. Head or governor.

Those who have withdrawn divide themselves into different groups and consult with one another, make the matter clear and

/26 cont./

728 communicate to one another their opinions, in what way they
• 695 wish to see the points of difference resolved. If they are agreed concerning these, then they return to the chief in the shed and the discussion of the matter takes place anew, until finally agreement exists. During this consultation of the elders or council
[562] members a solemn seriousness prevails among them. Women are sometimes admitted to these conferences, but never have a voice, and come merely to listen and to see.

After the matter has been settled to the satisfaction of all parties, the cup once more makes several rounds among those present, and thereafter everyone goes silently and quietly to his camp or dwelling.

Chapter XVIII

Music, Musical Instruments

533 Their music is very simple and monotonous; one makes use of it, to the accompaniment of song and dance, at festivals and cult ceremonies.

534 The instruments are variously used and doubtless according to the type of event. Thus the so-called long drum, called agida (2), is played at cult ceremonies; on other occasions one

2. Papáá drum.

uses the small or apientie drum. Furthermore they have an instrument called kwakwa stool by them, a stool or board of very hard wood on which one beats with two sticks.

534 When they dance the papaá-wenti, an African idol dance,
535 they use the agida drum. For the sorgé, or ordinary dance, they play the small drum or apienti.

They dance the soesa to the beat of the small drum and with the kwakwa stool; in executing the last-named dance a great deal of competition prevails among the dancers, and the one who

● 695 [For information concerning a pseudo-trial procedure involving the interrogation of a recently deceased person for purposes of judging him, see category 116, pp. 243-245.]

6:Herault--302 K-5 (1949-1956) 1961 SRS Bush Negroes SRS Boni

/197 cont./

The rites of the worship of Odun are known only by the grand man and by an old man who replaces him when he travels. They are practiced only on the occasion of the collective oath against witi, renewed every two or three years, and when it is necessary to implore Odun's mercy toward an offender. The officiant bathes the latter's body with a maceration of leaves that he alone knows.

To question Odun and know whether he pardons, they make use of a sacred object named afalaku, placed on a board put on the heads of two men. The answers yes and no are deduced by interpretation of the movements of the bearers, as in the interrogation of the dead.

The oath before Odun is also practiced as a legal test, permitting a man unjustly accused of theft or any misdeed whatever to justify himself.

Thus, in November, 1959, B... of Asisi, accused by two Djuka of being responsible for the burning of a large cabin /carbet/ in which objects of value were stored, asked to justify himself before Odun.

Odun's laws, which have the effect of forbidding violence, vengeance, and every form of oppression, give to the society of the Refugee Blacks a unique atmosphere of dignity and serenity which is not found to the same degree in animistic African societies. Most African societies censure sorcery and murder, but they accept vengeance and various forms of oppression. It is probable that the men who, two or three centuries ago, deep in the forests of Surinam, developed these laws, were inspired more or less consciously by Christian ideas; but they introduced them into an African system of thought, associating them with the idea of material sanctions in the present life, without which they would have been powerless.

/234 cont./

• 695 Fist-fighting is practiced also between individuals as a test for justification. If someone is unjustly accused of theft, this is the first idea which occurs to him, even before the oath before Odun. On this subject the Refugee Blacks have a conception analogous to that of the ancient Europeans, according to which God will come to the aid of the innocent person, giving him the strength of ten. This fighting, too, is subject to precise rules; it can be indulged in only publicly, in a village, never in the bush or on the river.

In spite of the importance attached to the oath before Odun, Boni custom does not make provision for any test for justification having a recognized legal value. This is what makes 628 613 the symbolic battle indispensable. Intervention is then asked of the head of a neutral lineage in order to restore peace. If no death or calamity takes place allowing /235/ belief in the unappeased vengeance of a dead person, the affair is very quickly forgotten. For example, in examining the table of marriages among the various lineages, one ascertains that there are a number of normal unions between the Dipélu and the Awara Bakka.

643 692 In these kinds of affairs the grand man has two very exact functions:

--To reveal pretense;

--To intervene as supreme arbiter in case of necessity.

[787] [695] Each time that someone is attacked by a fit of possession and claims to speak in the name of a yaŋka coming to exercise a kunu, the lineage head conducts him to the grand man who makes sure that there is no question of pretense.

643 775 787 695 ".The grand man, in the thought of the Boni, has the power to compel any yaŋka to manifest itself.

He conducts the person concerned to the fraga tiki and invokes the yaŋka. If pretense is involved, the individual will not be able to articulate a syllable. If it is true possession, the yaŋka will speak through his mouth.

6-Hurault--367 K-9 (1948-1956) 1961 585 Bush Negroes 585 Boni

643 /235 cont./
995 A few years ago a Kormotibo woman was thus confounded.
787 She had wanted to pretend possession by a yɔ́kɛ́ in order to
695 blackmail another family.

Grand Man Difu recently forbade the bequeathing of gods
784 and yɔ́kɛ́ exercising the kunu (1). People will wait for them
643
[787]

1. Let us recall that the dead are questioned on this subject as for the apportionment of the rest of their heritage.

to manifest themselves of their own accord. That will reduce the risks of pretense.

643 The grand man's lineage does not exercise any kunu upon
613 another lineage, and no kunu is exercised upon it. For the Boni
995 this is a fundamental idea, because the grand man is precisely
784 the supreme recourse in case of persistent calamities attributed to the yɔ́kɛ́ of a dead person. The grand man has the power to exercise all the dead Boni. If his lineage exercised a kunu or were victim of one, he would be judge and litigant at the same time.

When, with the death of Grand Man Difu, the Dikan lineage is extinct, and when the function passes to another lineage, consideration of the kunu exercised by the lineages upon one another will be determinative in the choice of his successor.

Divination; Premonition; Dreams

787
626
182 Divination. It plays an essential role among the Refugee Blacks as in all animistic societies. Individuals have recourse to it to inspire all important discussions; in large measure one can say that for them it takes the place of will and conscience.

/257/

987 In this way they put a series of questions entailing yes or no answers and which narrow down the problem more and more.

991 For this divinatory procedure, they pay the man who has brought it into play three liters of tafia, two pieces of cloth, and one machete.

989 This procedure is put into play to confound thieves and
695 adulterers. The plaintiff publicly calls on the accused to come and undergo the test: Mi ɔ tyε yu go a swali! If he refuses, it is the equivalent of a confession.

In 1947, Liki (Aw.B.), accused of having stolen 20 grams of gold by a man from Loka, was thus put to the test. The rope was not cut. He was declared innocent and it was the plaintiff who had to pay the price of the test.

In 1950, the uncle of Tahayé (Dip. I) accused him of having committed adultery with his wife. He denied it, but he was put to the test which gave a positive result; he confessed immediately and begged his uncle's pardon. Then they were reconciled. Of course it was he who paid the price of the test.

989 Another important divinatory procedure is the Kumɛ̃nu bui (ring of Kumɛ̃nu). This is a surprising form of divination by pendulum. The ring, which is made of fibers, is ordinarily kept hidden by its owner. Very few people have any. The ring, suspended at the end of a string, is put in oscillation. Its owner puts a question to it. If the answer is affirmative, it oscillates from right to left. If it is negative, it describes a circle.

725 Another procedure is sometimes used after a sacrifice to know whether the god has received it favorably: it consists of killing a rooster to examine the color of its testicles: if they are found to be black, the sacrifice has not been accepted.

Gottraux--373 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 986 Bush Negroes 986
Saui

/239 cont./

954 [1004] 829

On this point it is taken for granted that Indian magic is much more powerful than African magic, and that any Indian is capable of attracting his enemy's asiba.

--Transforming himself into a vampire (azemã) and flying at night in search of sleeping men in order to suck their blood and eat them in spirit; this conception, closely related to the one which the West Indians have of the soucougnan, comes from Dahomey (in Fon, aze = sorcery). It is said, as in Dahomey, that the azemã flies by emitting fire through the anus.

--Seni wi sani: this is what the Creoles call "sending bad baggage." This is acting upon a living being or an inanimate object to make it behave in abnormal fashion at the expense of the enemy. For example, if someone is bitten by a snake or if a child is carried off by a tiger, the action of a wisimã will be blamed first, for normally snake and tiger do not attack. But there is no material limit to the action of the wisimã, who can make a branch fall on his enemy's head or make a cartridge of dynamite burst prematurely.

(829)

The idea that the sorcerer may transform himself into a jaguar, dog, or other animal is not assumed by the Refugee Blacks. Neither do they have the idea of brotherhood of sorcerers.

954 695

How does society defend itself against the wisimã? There is first of all the test oath. At regular intervals, every two or three years for example, the grand man gathers together all the Boni to the last man before Odun's chapel, and makes each one drink a little of a magic liquid while inviting him to utter the formula: Afu mi e meki wisi fu dede a sama, mi mu dede: If I do sorcery to make someone die, I must die. This is what is called diggi sweri, to drink the test. Actually, it is a harmless liquid, but each one is convinced that a wisimã would not be able to drink it without dying from it. If someone stubbornly refuses to present himself at the ceremony, he is not obliged to, but he has denounced himself: suspicions will be directed on him henceforward.

/239 cont./

754 Trial for sorcery does not exist among the Bozo. But a
789 procedure exists which allows for putting down suspicions.

After each death the dead person is asked the question: Is it wisi that killed thee? The question is put last (they first ask kuma, then fyo-fyo /see p. 394/).

If it is wisi, they ask: Is it such-and-such a family? (In general it is on the lineage itself), then the names of the lineage members are uttered successively until there is a positive response.

754 The one who is thus accused of wisi can be summoned
• 695 to justify himself before the grand man, but that can only have the character of an investigation and not a trial. The suspected individual may not be challenged. They accept the fact that it is only a matter of presumption and that the dead accuser can lie, pursuing vengeance beyond the grave.

The Refugee Blacks declare that there is no certainty about wisi.

754 A remarkable principle of customary law is that if a
613 member of a matrilineage /240/ is believed to have killed one
692 of his "brothers," the judiciary power of the Bozo cannot interfere. It is an affair purely within the lineage.

754 Thus no one can be challenged or expelled for an act of sorcery. If one suspects somebody strongly, one will avoid him, one will turn the cold shoulder to him, all the time remaining polite, but one will not show anything. To this principle is attached a very noble idea, that of the interdiction of vengeance. He who is victim of sorcery must under no circumstances do countersorcery. He can only ask for the protection of the dia. One must not under any circumstances ask a divinity or his ancestors to harm his aggressor.

754 Among the Refugee Blacks there is only one sanction
715 against the wisimã: They will necessarily be found out at their
789 death. The yarka of the dead person, interrogated by the elders,

Guthrie--379 K-5 (1948-1956) 1961 586 Bush Negroes 586
Boni

/342 cont./

754 He accused him of being an asemI (vampire) and of drinking the ox's blood. S... answered nothing, which appeared to everyone obvious proof of his guilt. He untied his boat and went away. Since then everybody in Kotika avoids him; they abstain from accusing him personally in order not to become victims of his sorcery.

Agyémésu affair. -- Agyémésu, an old man of Asisi village (Awara Saka) who died in 1952, was a solitary and morose man with odd ways. For a long time he had been accused by S... (of Loka) and by N.... a Djuka living among the Boni, of being a wisimI and of having made them sick. He had even [595] been accused before the grand man, had denied it, and the grand man according to usage had told him: "We leave to God [169] the job of punishing thee if thou art guilty." Agyémésu, in order to flee his persecutors, had settled in the Indian village of Awalé.

His accusers insisted to people of his lineage that he be brought and publicly interrogated. A.... and P... were sent, who went to get him by making him believe that the council of the Awara Saka lo, putting an end to a long dispute, had decided to name him captain as the doyen of the lo. Without [595] mistrust, he followed them to Asisi. He was received by his [154] accusers who insulted him tumultuously, without, however, there being any blows. The poor man remained speechless, which appeared to all to be the obvious proof of his guilt. He took to his bed and five days later he was dead (1).

1. The Refugee Blacks are so suggestible that the sole fact of seeing oneself cursed and abandoned by all must bring on a psychological shock capable [171] of bringing death. Similar cases have been observed in Africa.

G:Bureau--301 K-3 (1948-1958) 1961 589 Roth No. pages 588
Bern

/243 cont./

754 only commonplace illnesses or accidents of some sort. We
243 have never heard poisoning, in the usual sense of the term, mentioned.

754 The wisimã trials are in our opinion the most unpleasant
695 aspect of the civilization of the Refugee Blacks. But it must
182 be admitted that they correspond to profound necessities. These archaic societies need an obvious materialization of the principles they have given themselves. Since evil exists, opposing itself to good, the practices of wisi and wisimã exist, and the punishment of evildoers is indispensable for the society to remain subject to the law of good.

184 By its notion of the kunu which turns aside toward the gods the responsibility for most misfortunes, by the extreme rarity of wisimã trials, by the prudence of its judiciary action which in point of fact pursues only the dead, the society of the Refugee Blacks shows itself humane and realistic.

If one undertook with the Refugee Blacks efficient action to make these practices disappear, one would risk obscuring their notion of good and evil and removing all efficacy from their customary law.

183 The social order of the Refugee Blacks cannot be maintained if the interdiction of harming anyone and the interdiction of vengeance do not remain clearly laid down. It matters little that these acts of sorcery are without real content: it is the intention to harm which counts, with all its social and psychological consequences.

171 When one observes the Creole populations of the Guianas
177 and the West Indies, even though /244/ they have been under
182 the influence of Christianity for several centuries, one is
754 struck by the development of sorcery and by its repercussions on the whole of social life. The teaching received at school and from the catechism, which embraces white magic and black magic in a single reprobation, has greatly contributed toward making these populations lose the principles of social morals of their ancestors without in exchange modifying their

Gilliard--BIC A-5 (1948-1958) 1961 588 Bush Negroes 583
Boni

/264 cont./

191 image of the world. Since magic practices are rejected by
179 religion, since it even denies their reality, one does not think
182 when one finds oneself constrained to have recourse to them,
754 of transferring to them the notion of good and evil where it
reaches. Black magic gets in almost inevitably because a
person believes he must defend himself, then its use becomes
habitual, and the two forms of magic end up by mixing to-
gether and being no longer regarded as fundamentally different
from each other.

191 Cases of witchcraft and Boni customary law. In African villages,
954 cases of sorcery are interpreted by interminable and useless
695 discussions, wild accusations, protestations of innocence,
sometimes more or less sincere confessions, oaths and ordeals
with always contested results. These cases are never
finished; they are in permanent evolution, sometimes for months
and years. Opinion moves successively onto different hypotheses
according to events which take place, seeking its way groping
like a man lost in darkness.

754 It is clear that the first lawgivers of the Refugee Blacks,
695 by carrying judgment back to the death of those concerned and
182 by refusing the witness any kind of pardon or compromise, tried
to prevent the development of these sad crises. What is the
use of discussing interminably, since there is no certain proof,
and since nobody may confess? But customary law collides on
this point with tendencies too deep to be entirely restrained.
The laws of Ouan are not always obeyed to the letter, and it
happens sometimes that the Boni lose their footing in the
[577] observance of their customary law. Then crises take place
among them, as violent and confused as in the villages of
Black Africa, going as far as paralyzing social life for several
weeks; then peace returns for several months, sometimes for
several years.

Guiraudet--382 K-5 (1949-1950) 1961 580 Bush Negroes 586
Boni

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In 1946, a Bonneville woman, N.... was convicted of having paid a Creole quimboiseur to make the grand man die. She confessed, a rare thing in this kind of case, and the materiality of the facts did not appear doubtful. The Boni were strongly impressed by this unprecedented event, and for several weeks the members of the lineage concerned were in such agitation that one could have believed they had lost their reason. In Bonneville they "held court" continually for nearly two months, and they discussed so much that farm work was neglected and part of the rice crop lost.

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What were they going to do with this woman? The laws of Odun forbade killing her, no more could she be expelled. The Boni made discreet overtures to the administration to find out whether it was not possible to have her imprisoned. They were surprised to learn that French law does not recognize the offense of sorcery. Somebody then proposed having her admitted as a servant at the leprosarium of the Acaroouani on the /245/ coast. This suggestion produced a surprising result; the Boni were unanimous in thinking that making someone who was not a leper live in a leprosarium was a punishment worse than death, and they resolved to pardon her.

How does one go about it, since the laws of Odun do not permit pardoning a wisimdi? Nobody could give us a satisfactory justification on this, but in 1950 A...., the preceding year spurned and maltreated, had taken up normal living again in her village.

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In fact, a case of wisi is terminated only upon the death of the person concerned. If a man who has been accused of wisi during his lifetime dies accidentally, or is struck by a fulminating sickness, the fact that he has been chastised by Odun appears as incontestable proof. The case is fixed in the memory of the group in a specific form and will be given as an example to inspire respect for customary law.

754 /246 cont./
755 The maloi asked 2,000 francs from him as the price of
648 his consultation.

789 Curse. Someone who judges himself victim of evil-doing has at his disposal a supreme resource: /267/ cursing his adversary, that is, appealing directly to the supreme God, Masa Gadu, to ask him to punish his adversary. This is called wini gadu -- sending God -- against someone. To do that, while asking God to kill him or make him sick, one kneels and strikes the ground with both hands in the presence of the adversary or in front of his house. This act is regarded as totally different from wisi, for one is relying on the justice of God, who judges with equity and punishes only the guilty.

However that may be, cursing is for the Refugee Blacks a very serious act. It may happen that, feeling guilty, the source of the injustice asks pardon and promises to make amends for his misdeeds. The one who uttered the curse again implores Masa Gadu in order to take back the words he spoke: "He has given me satisfaction, do nothing against him." But oftener still it happens that a complicated affair is involved, that both parties concerned are persuaded of their legitimate ground and curse each other. The case must then be carried before the grand man and straightened out at once or misfortunes [692] may pounce upon both lineages. The grand man judges without [695] appeal and inflicts a punishment on the one who was wrong on the main issue of the debate. Then he obliges the ad- [778] versaries to be reconciled before the fraga tiki, where the [702] offering of tafia and water is made.

[828] The effect of these conceptions is to render nearly im- [754] possible hidden hatreds and rancors, which the Refugee Blacks fear very much, for they are the source of wisi.

688 In general, the act of getting angry in public and serious-
689 ly insulting somebody is considered as an offense against moral and religious law, capable of attracting misfortunes; it is an